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THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE ST. VINCENT
DE PAUL SOCIETY IN BOSTON

A Thesis

Submitted by

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I send you a leaf of the blessed oak of
St. Vincent,
It will dry in the book where you place
it;
But Charity will never grow dry in your
heart.

Frederick Ozanam

Chapter 1

A Brief Survey of the Origins of Social Service

The Twentieth Century for all its proud modernity is kin to every Century that has preceded it. Its scientific advancement has been breath-taking. What with its atom-smashing machines, its two-hundred inch telescopes, its five hundred mile per hour Dive-Bombing Machines, the imagination seems outrun. Honestly, however, it must be admitted that the principles underlying these contrivances are the discoveries of another age. No wise man can neglect History. That is his third eye, whereby he can pivot easily between the centuries. No one can understand the present without a knowledge of the past nor can he plan for the future without it. Modern tools must be used to repair new machines it is true. A good mechanic, however, must have a knowledge of mechanical principles as well as precision tools in his dexterous hands.

Social problems have kept pace with inventions. Each has grown complicated. The work of caring for afflicted humanity is assuming scientific forms. Every advancement in human knowledge is utilized where it can help to adjust in human Society those who have been displaced by misfortune, disease or poverty. And yet Social Service must be watchful lest it settle into a mere science.

Philanthropy and Charity

Social Service is our stream-lined word describing for us an old principle--Christianity, Charity, for the origin of the word goes back to the Greek language. It was the word found by the primitive Christians to express love of man for the sake of God. Break down Social Service into any number of atoms, smash the atom and you will find Charity at its core. This Charity cannot be demonstrated in a laboratory, nor observed in a test-tube. Nor is it simply sympathy or sentiment. It is a spirit as truly as goodness or beauty or truth.

There are many motives in the human heart that urge man to interest himself in the welfare of his fellow man. One of these is called philanthropy or humanitarianism. It is a splendid effort whereby an unfortunate human is comforted by his brother human out of friendliness, or simple love for him as a man. What an anodyne against the ills of life! Analyzing this motive, however, some could find this urge toward benefaction good, but quite within the realm of selfishness. Who can deny the depth of satisfaction one experiences from feeding a hungry child, or rescuing a stranger from drowning, or the giving of clothing to a shivering beggar on a snowy Christmas Eve. Is not the warm feeling surging in the breast of such a donor sufficient recompense for his money out of his pocket?

The True Meaning of Charity

Christian charity would perform similar benevolences out of the motive of pure love of God, not for the glow of satisfaction following them. Therefore, Charity's good works could be wholly unselfish whether subconsciously or otherwise.

The Yankee philosopher Orestes Brownson has said on this point;

Philanthropy corresponds to charity as the human corresponds to the Divine. It is at best the pale and evanescent human reflex of Christian Charity.¹

Dr. McColgan, in his work on Joseph Tuckerman, has treated this idea with a beautiful clarity of thought and expression, thus;

Philanthropy is not repugnant to, rather it is an inadequate rival of, Christian Charity. Each works and breathes the atmosphere of a different level of life. The one shares neither the elevation, nor the power, nor the rewards of the other. For Philanthropy urges benevolence and benefaction toward man as man, whereas, Charity prompts love of man for the love of God. The former speaks at best with the tongues of men, the latter from the lips of Christ. Charity entails a knowledge of what human nature really is, and so with keener intelligence and finer incentive, it serves men better. It serves men as the sons of God. Christian charity assumes the Divine origin, the immortal

¹ Orestes A. Brownson; "Liberalism and Socialism" Brownson's Quarterly Review, 3:193-194, April, 1855

character and eternal destiny of each individual man. It speaks of man not in mere anthropological terms. Instead, it views him in the light of supernatural truths. It serves man not merely as another wayfarer, but as a spiritual kinsman, a brother of Christ, a child of God.²

This idea injects the religious motive into philanthropy that has ever been apparent in the lives of deeply religious people, namely, love of the poor. Francis of Assisi, the beloved hero of all philanthropists, is the model of such. No one can deny that the little Italian lover of men, birds, and bees, loved God first and best. Robinhood was a thief who loved the poor. He is a particularly interesting fictional character because he was different from most thieves. It is true, too, that notorious persons sometimes attract attention for their generosity of money, or goods for the poor. Once again, it is the exceptional circumstances that draws attention here. There is no gainsaying that Christians feel Religion is a bond binding God with man. The very same bond unites man with man in filial ties.

The outward forms of Charity grow efficiently with experience. The case worker of today, with a progressing knowledge of the science of the human mind, of evolving economics, can approach a problem of human need with greater

² Daniel T. McColgan, Joseph Tuckerman, (Wash. D.C. Catholic University of America Press, 1940), pp. 13-14.

skill than formerly. The problem itself can be solved more effectively. This knowledge, however, ought not be permitted to extinguish the fire of charity that motivated all endeavor to be a Good Samaritan. Organized charity, yes, by all means, but not so as to become in the words of the Boston poet, John Boyle O'Reilly:

the organized charity, scrimped and
iced, in the name of a cautious,
statistical Christ.³

A Modern Charity Society

There is a society in Boston today that is founded on the ideals of Charity set forth in the above paragraph. It is known as the St. Vincent de Paul Society, comprised of volunteer workers. For an understanding of its aims and works it is necessary to know the origin from which it sprang. The purpose of this paper is an attempt to describe the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Boston by the means of an historical sketch of the organization; that will comprise the following:

1. A narration of the beginnings of the Society in France.
2. Its spread through Europe and to America.
3. The development and spread of the Society in the U. S.
4. A history of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Boston and a view of its workings today.

³ John Boyle O'Reilly, Statistical Christ, (Boston, Mass: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), p. 57.

The origin of the St. Vincent de Paul Society was simple, its organizers single-minded. In the more than hundred years of its existence it has grown, progressed and prospered. Yet, its spirit remains static. The spirit of the man who began the work pervades the Society today. The title, The Society of St. Vincent de Paul, names the man who inspired the founder of the Society. To know the work of this Social Service group requires a knowledge of its history. But that knowledge would be incomplete unless something was known of the personalities of those eminent men of France, Vincent de Paul and Frederick Ozanam, whose spirits still breathe in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

St. Vincent de Paul

Vincent de Paul was living when Shakespeare lived, having been born in Southwest France in the latter part of the Sixteenth Century. In the year 1650 at Paris, Vincent saw that city, with a population of half a million, having forty thousand people completely destitute. Worst of all, he found children of this group huddled in institutions, abandoned to them by frantic parents, where dreadful cruelty, if not wholesale massacre, was their lot. The insane and diseased were not treated as well as
⁴
 animals.

4 John Rochford, Frederick Ozanam, (Ireland: The Catholic Truth Society, 1924), p. 32.

Vincent de Paul plunged personally into this human morass with a burning zeal. Others following his lead organized into groups so that they could more effectively deal with these running sores in the body of human society. The railway station in Paris today, St. Lazare, bears the name of the hospital St. Vincent, founded for the care of the insane and for those infected with such loathesome diseases that no one else would care for them. Vincent's work was so successful that it was imitated all over Europe.

The position in the history of Charitable work given to St. Vincent de Paul was recognized by Dr. Henry Bradford Washburn, the dean of the Episcopal Theological School, Cambridge, Massachusetts. In a work on the religious motive in philanthropy he wrote:

For years in teaching Church History I had passed Vincent by with only a nod of recognition. He was an acquaintance rather than a friend. I told my classes that he was the patron saint of Roman Catholic Charities; I told them nothing more. And I am not altogether sure that the casual remark was not intended to tell them that that was about all they need know, for of what importance to them were modern Roman Catholic Charities or their origins? Protestant charities and non-sectarian charities were so much more within our traditions! But as time went on, I found him pulling me gently and steadily, and firmly closer to himself. Although for many years I said little more of him to my classes, I became aware that the time might come when I would know him better and then I would tell others of him.⁵

⁵ McColgan, op. cit., p. 24.

Frederick Ozanam

Some two hundred years later, a brilliant young French Professor with a chair for life at the Sorbonne, became ignited by the fire still being emitted from the soul of Vincent de Paul. Frederick Ozanam was his name. Intellectual brilliance, it seemed, would be his claim to fame. He advanced from one triumph to another in the fields of Science, Law and Literature. His scientific work was no doubt encouraged by the now world-renowned Ampere, at whose home he was a permanent guest. There he saw all the best men of science of his day. At a youthful age he became Doctor of Law, Doctor of Letters, Professor of Law at Lyons, and Professor of Literature at the University of Paris.⁶ In May, 1833, this man at the age of twenty founded the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, an organization of philanthropy and charity to minister to the poor of Paris in the spirit of Vincent.

The France of the first half of the Nineteenth Century suffered from the evils of Revolution; new-found Democracy produced excesses. Cynicism of the hardest kind flourished. It was fertile soil for Poverty. Those were dark days for afflicted humanity.

⁶ Rochford, op. cit., p. 44.

Ozanan's Idea

What aroused Ozanan more than the economic distress of so many, was their depressing destitution of soul. His theory for relief contained more than bread for empty stomachs, hospitalization for the sick and graves for their dead. The cry for help that distracted Frederick Ozanan from his studies was the plaintive appeal for sympathy and understanding rising from the suffering poor.⁷

His plan had the novelty of visitations to the homes of the needy by workers prepared to deal with their current emergency. They prepared also to listen patiently to the recitation of their woes. Here would be a chance to study at first hand the case. Every side of the social maladjustment could be considered. Was that not Case Work? To understand the pioneering spirit of this attempt, one has to remember the Economic atmosphere of those days. Europe had been lately industrialized. The working classes were in the same category with machines. The Industrialists were saturated with the crass philosophy that wealth alone is what counts and that the accumulation of it is prior to all else. Human needs were less to be considered than oil for machines. Men became slaves in

⁷ William Woodcock, "Frederick Ozanan, His Life and Work," The Irish Ecclesiastical Record, 6:357, August, 1870.

the Kingdom of Economics.

Ozanam and The Religious Motive

Frederick Ozanam was an ardent Catholic. His work was among Catholics in Catholic France, albeit the religion was torn by the political tumult contemporary with him. It was natural that he should be concerned with religious status of his clients. Yet, it must be remembered that his was the work of a layman. There was nothing official about the beginnings of his organization although later his rule was approved by the Holy See. The religious problems of the poor were no more than the religious problems of Northern France.

Ozanam was seventeen when the July Revolution broke out in all its fury. He was a contemporary of the events that punished the Catholic Church in France severely. The opening of the nineteenth century found the Church scarcely functioning. The Hierarchy was gone, the great religious houses had been shut down, monks and nuns hounded to death. Napoleon had imprisoned Pope Pius VII after having lured him to France to make peace. Even with the fall of Napoleon and the Restoration of the Bourbons, the Catholic Church was linked with that movement for the purpose of politics. Thus in the minds of most Frenchmen the Church was wrongly joined with the forces of re-

8 Carlton J. Hayes, A Political and Cultural History of Modern Europe, (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1936), p. 93.

9

action and absolutism which they detested.

It was to be expected that there should be found among the lower classes bitterness and cynicism. Their Catholic Faith was moribund. It was this state of affairs that aroused the religious zeal of Ozanam and his group. Thus they felt the great need to comfort the souls of the afflicted, to revive their Faith, while ministering, too, to their temporal needs. These men of deep religious Faith realized that their lapsed Catholic clients had suffered their worst loss in losing their faith. And they knew, too, that in helping them to regain it, they were restoring a compass that would guide them safely through the straits of life's problem.

More to the point, however, than this background was a particular situation that focalized Ozanam's attention. In the early eighteen thirties (1830's) there was a group of anti-clericals in Paris following the lead worship of one, Comte de St. Simon. To anyone who would say to this group that the Church had the power to heal the wounds and evils of Society, they would say:

If you speak, what you say is true,
Christianity did do wonders, but now
it is played out. What works are you
doing to prove your faith and make us
respect and believe it?¹⁰

9 John O'Grady, Catholic Charities in the U. S. (Wash. D. C. Nat'l. Conf. of Catholic Charities, 1931), p. 24.

10 Ainslie Coates. Letters of Frederick Ozanam, (London, E. Stoch, 1886), p. 313.

This was a sting to Ozanam. His answer was no eloquent apology. It was in action.

The First St. Vincent de Paul Conference

In a little back room of a printing office during May, 1833, a group of eight men sat down at the First Conference of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, under the leadership of Frederick Ozanam. So obscure were the beginnings that the names of all are not too clear. Among those who were of a certainty present are the names of Lallier, Lamarche, Le Taillandier, Devaux and Clave. All of these were young men, pursuing their studies in Paris; Law, Medicine and Science. It is said that each had a good family background.

Organized, they named themselves the Conference of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. They began with the fundamental aim of visitation of the poor in their homes. The words of Ozanam himself carry the key to their constitution.

We must endeavor to go to the root of the evil and by wise social reforms try to reduce the widespread distress. But we are convinced that a knowledge of the reforms which it is necessary to introduce is to be learned not so much by pondering over books or by discussions with politicians, as by going to visit the garrets in which they live; by sitting at the bedside of the dying; by feeling the cold which they feel; by learning from their lips the causes of their woes--then we really begin

to understand a little of this formidable problem of poverty.¹¹

At the first meeting two principles were adopted that helped greatly in avoiding pitfalls, so far as personnel was concerned. The first was the exclusion of politics from the Conference Room. Another was the agreement that the Conference would not interest itself as a Conference, in the temporal affairs of the members. Their finances were to come from the contributions in secret, of the members themselves. It was to be a real Conference. The various visitors to the poor would report their findings to the group and discussion as to the best means of relief would be decided. They were known to each other as Brothers, in the great work of charity. It was in their minds, too, that their idea should spread. Ozanam hoped to extend similar Conferences all over Europe.

The problem as to how they were to transmit their ideals and spirit to other groups arose. They knew the difficulties of framing a Constitution or Rule, i.e. of reducing to cold laws a flaming zeal. Sagaciously they avoided any attempt at Rule. Who could know better than Ozanam, the Doctor of Laws, the volatility of ideals when they are jelled into language. It was decided to record in simple language the account of the do-

¹¹ Kathleen O'Meara, Frederick Ozanam, (New York; New York Catholic School Book Company, 1878), p. 20.

ings of the First Conference.

Here, then, was a new group pioneering in a new form of helping the poor. These eight, students of the Law and of Medicine and Science, placed their intelligence and special skills at the disposal of the poor. Indigent people were referred to the Conference by the local parishes or priests. The relief was given in the form of food and clothing, however, this Conference of Charity had a much higher motive.¹² Instead of being satisfied with the giving of some meagre material relief, these practitioners of real charity sought to win the confidence of the individual, understand his situation, his problem, his needs, and then to help him help himself. The group had no intention of grappling with the social problems of the whole world. They were content to begin with a few of the poor and have their growth by its own vitality.

What this idealistic group of eight accomplished practically can be gleaned from the fact that in twenty-five years their numbers grew to two thousand in Paris alone, where they visited five thousand families, an average of twenty thousand individuals, who represented one-fourth of the poor of that vast city.¹³

12 Rochford, op. cit., p. 15.

13 O'Meara, op. cit., pp. 63-64.

In this simple way, the spirit of Ozanam and his followers has been passed on to the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul today the world over.

For nineteen years Frederic Ozanam continued in the work of Charity in its novel way, during which time he traveled throughout France and Italy forming other Conferences. Everywhere the spirit of Ozanam could be found. That spirit can be expressed in some way by the keynote of his character, sympathy. He had a ready and quick understanding of his fellow man, a tender solicitude for those suffering. Nor could it be called a mere humanitarianism, a feeling that can be had in a smaller degree for suffering animals. The word that comes nearest to describing the soul of Ozanam is Charity, burning Christian Charity. He died unfortunately at the early age of thirty-nine, in September of 1853.¹⁴

The Fruits of Ozanam's Work

This brief description of the man and his work creates the impression of one whose influence upon modern Social Service was that of a pioneer and too little appreciated. The modern St. Vincent de Paul is the fruit of his labors.

The present international scope of this Society testifies further to the fulfillment of those ideals. But the

14 O'Meara, op. cit., p. 80.

strength of numbers has in no way replaced or discounted the strength of purpose that motivated the original eight. Ozanam and his group knew that the power of charity was infinite, and like goodness itself, it had in itself the power for diffusion.

No simpler way to describe the ideals of these pioneers can be had than the following:

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul was created--for exercise of charity in the widest sense of the word. Charity for mind, charity for heart, charity for the whole man, full and perfect service to our neighbor by charity of the spirit.¹⁵

The St. Vincent de Paul Society today is progressing with the other agencies of Social Service. It, too, as we shall see in a further chapter, is gathering the fruits of modern scientific method and research. Yet its external form remains much as its founder hoped it would. The changes it is adopting are merely in form. Its inner spirit is alight with the flame of Frederick Ozanam.

¹⁵ Archibald Dunn, Frederick Ozanam and The Establishment of The Society of St. Vincent de Paul, (New York: Benziger Bros. Press, 1913), pp. 96-97.

Chapter 2

Trends and Development of the Society in the United States

It was no curious coincidence that the greatest migration of peoples in all history, which took place in the United States in the nineteenth century should parallel the growth and development of the St. Vincent de Paul Society here. It was a logical necessity. Here is one stupendous figure:

Between the years 1820-1910 the total migration of Europeans to the United States was more than twenty-five million. Germany contributed the largest numbers, five millions, Ireland next with four and a quarter millions and Italy third, with a few more than three millions.¹

Catholic Population

There were less than two hundred thousand Catholics in the United States in the year eighteen hundred and twenty. Twenty years later there were nearly six hundred and fifty thousand. From that point on the increase was in leaps and bounds. In eighteen hundred and fifty, there were a million and three-quarters and by eighteen hundred and sixty, the figures doubled. Of the Irish in this group (1860) forty-two percent were foreign born.²

¹ Immigration Commission, Report of the Immigration Comm. (Washington, D. C. 1911) p. 10.

² Gerald Shaughnessy, Has the Immigrant Kept the Faith? (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1925), p. 45.

Everyone knows that practically all immigrants came because of economic necessity, which means, they were the poor who wanted to improve their state in the land of promise. The imagination is numbed to conjure the human and social problems these migrating hordes brought with them. All of this had to do with the origins of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in this country. Therefore it is necessary to take a quick look at the whole immigration situation.

The religious issue in this situation is important. America had not yet become the melting pot; there was no problem of assimilating hordes who did not speak English. America needed settlers for the western lands and laborers for the canals and railroads that were beginning to be built. At the same time, however, many Americans began, somewhat illogically, to resent the presence of those who came.

This prejudice against newcomers as being interlopers was turned against the Catholic Irish. The Germans, whether Catholics or Protestants, for the most part went quietly to the West where, as they kept largely to themselves and retained their own language, they could be regarded as foreign colonies. The ordinary citizen rarely came in touch with them. But the Irish looked upon themselves as Americans from the moment that they landed, a

claim which seemed impudent to the older inhabitants. The trouble was that most of the Irish newcomers were papists, the Protestants among them were accepted readily enough. When the Nativist cry of America for the Americans went up, what was really meant, was America for the Protestants.³

The Irish Immigrants

The story of Irish immigration to the United States, particularly from 1840 to 1860 is a sad one. During those twenty years the total Irish immigration to this country was 1,734,268. Between 1847 and 1854, inclusive, 1,130,000 Irish immigrants came to the United States. Under ordinary circumstances people do not leave their own homes and remove themselves forever from their native associations even at the beckoning of greater economic opportunities. But the situation in Ireland was far from ordinary during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. By a series of penal laws passed by the English Parliament in the decade 1690-1700 the people of Ireland saw the land turned over to English settlers and their trade brought to ruin.⁴

There was nothing planned or systematic about the great tide of Irish emigration. It was just a mad, headlong

³ Theodore Maynard, The Story of American Catholicism (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1942), p. 278.

⁴ George A. O'Brien, The Economic History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century (Dublin and London: Maunsell and Co., Ltd., 1918), pp. 3-5.

rush of a people from a dungeon in which they were exposed to slow and painful death. Where they were going they knew not. They were just seeking nature's first escape from suffering. The dangers of the new land and the journey thereto could not be any more real than those to which they had been exposed at home. Weakened as they had been by their sufferings at home, the Irish immigrants of the late forties and early fifties were ill-prepared for the arduous journey to America. It is no wonder, that thousands of them died on the way to the land of their hopes. Disease stalked their path from the time they left home until they were settled in the new world.

The abnormally high mortality rate on British ships was due to overcrowding, to lack of proper sanitation, to insufficient food, to inadequate facilities for preparation of food, and to the weakened physical condition of the Irish passengers.⁵

The German Immigrants

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the political scene in Germany had shifted and this was to influence decidedly future emigration. With the liberation of Germany in 1813, her peasants looked forward to seeing their interests finally championed. However, they were

⁵ Report of the Select Committee of the Senate of the U. S. on Sickness and Mortality on Board Emigrant Ships, (Washington, D. C. 1856), pp. 9-12.

soon doomed to disappointment as the restored princes endeavored to recoup their losses by levying exorbitant taxes. The full effect of this burden naturally fell upon the peasants who, in even larger numbers, sought relief in America.

From 1849 German immigration reached unheard of figures and surpassed that of all other nations until the Slav and Italian immigration of 1890. It was economic factors that exercised the most potent influence on the German immigration of this century. The peasants were ground down by taxation and they suffered from poor harvests as did the Irish people. The various features of this immigration bring out the fact that the Germans were far less liable to fall victims of poverty than the Irish. The Germans were, in general, excellent farmers and they succeeded where their neighbors had to move on. It was in the capacity of skilled workers that the Germans were found in the cities where they could bear the brunt of crises far better than the unskilled Irishmen. Moreover, the German immigration was better organized than that of the Irish who were unlike the Germans and the other Europeans, who had the leisure and means to organize emigration. Thus we see that the German was fairly well protected when settling in America.⁶

⁶ Francis E. Lane, American Charities and the Child of the Immigrant (Washington, D. C. The Catholic University of America, 1932), p. 13

Religious and Social Care of the Immigrants

Since about two-thirds of the immigrants to the United States came through the port of New York, immigration was a matter of vital concern to both the state and city authorities. There was a large amount of criticism in the early forties about the treatment of immigrants on landing in the city. A number of private organizations established headquarters in order to protect the immigrants.⁷

Any charitable assistance rendered to immigrants was a part of the missionary or proselytizing of Protestantism. All charity in America was dominated by a sectarian spirit and under Protestant leadership. This was quite as true of public as of private institutions. Before the Civil War Protestantism was the only religion that the inmates of almshouses were permitted to practice.⁸ Catholic services in any form were religiously excluded from these institutions. Priests were not even admitted in case of sickness and death. The Catholic religion was regarded as a foreign religion. As a matter of course children were indentured into Protestant homes. Regardless of law this practice continued in many institutions up to the end of the eighteenth century. All public and private charity was

⁷ John O'Grady, Catholic Charities in the United States (Washington, D. C. National Conference of Catholic Charities, 1931), p. 240.

⁸ John O'Grady, The Catholic Church and the Destitute (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1929), pp. 68-69.

planned with a view to winning the immigrant and especially his children. The immigrants really found themselves isolated in a strange land.⁹

It was during this stress and strain that the St. Vincent de Paul Society in the United States began its great work. It was the first lay organization to bring together the various Catholic immigrant groups. When the immigrants began to organize, they united along racial and national lines; but as their difficulties continued to press more heavily upon them, they came to realize how much they had in common.

American Protestant leaders honestly believed that the great hope for the immigrant was to Americanize him after their own pattern. To do this in the case of the adult would be exceedingly difficult. Therefore, their hope rested with the children. Hence it was that the Protestant philanthropy became so much interested in saving the children of the immigrant.¹⁰

It was through the medium of philanthropic effort that the most damaging attacks were made on the Catholic faith of the poor immigrants. It was an interesting coincidence that in the field of Catholic charity the immigrants should have found an organization that brought them

⁹ Ibid., p. 72.

¹⁰ John O'Grady, Catholic Charities in the United States (Washington, D. C.: National Conference of Catholic Charities, 1931), p. 239.

all together and enabled them to forget racial hostilities and language differences in a common cause. The St. Vincent de Paul Society became one of the fundamental agencies through which Catholics of all races gave expression to their traditional charities. It served as a bond of union in their struggle for the preservation of the faith of their children.

Establishment of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in the United States

The first conference of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in this country was established in St. Louis in 1845, just twelve years after the foundation of the Society in Paris.¹¹ The St. Louis Conference owed its existence to Bryan J. Mullanphy who had become acquainted with the work of the Society during his sojourn in the French capital. Mr. Mullanphy, a son of John Mullanphy, the philanthropist, had been identified with a wide range of charitable efforts in St. Louis, a city which in his time was the gateway of the Middle West. Thousands of immigrants on their way westward in quest of free land found themselves in St. Louis with their funds exhausted. It was also a haven of refuge for those who could not survive the hardships of pioneer life on the prairies and in the Rockies. St. Louis was, therefore, confronted with a very serious immigrant aid

11 Ibid., p. 242.

problem. It was with the thought of aiding immigrants especially Irish immigrants in distress in St. Louis that he had set up the Mullanphy fund, which was established in 1815. This fund was primarily for immigrants traveling from one city to another and furnishing them with money for their necessary expenditures. After the immigrants had arrived, the fund was then used for travelers' aid. It is now used to support the Mullanphy Travelers' Aid Society. In his charitable work Bryan Mullanphy carried on the splendid traditions established by his father, John Mullanphy. The elder Mullanphy was the great pioneer leader in the development of Catholic Charities in St. Louis. His name and generosity are inextricably bound up with all the early Catholic charitable institutions of that city.

During the fifteen years following its organization in St. Louis, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul made rapid progress in the United States. In 1847 the Society was organized in Albany; in 1848, in New York City; in 1852, in New Orleans; in 1853, in Providence; in 1857, in Chicago and Washington; and in 1858, in Philadelphia and Louisville, 12

12 Laurence Henry, S.J., The Mullanphys of St. Louis, (Washington, D.C: U. S. Catholic Historical Society, 1900), pp. 70-85.

13 John O'Grady, Catholic Charities in the U.S. (Washington, D.C: National Conference of Catholic Charities, 1931), p. 221.

What contributed more than anything else to the success of the St. Vincent de Paul Society is that it became the medium through which the immigrants struggled for the spiritual salvation of the dependent and neglected children of their race. It was through the Society's efforts that the dependent child of the immigrant was allowed to follow his religious traditions. When poverty or illness required the separation of immigrant families, the Society arranged that the children should receive religious instruction in the same faith as their parents. Likewise, the Society in relieving distressed families sometimes learned that the children's religious education was being neglected. This situation was corrected by the Society's arranging for the children's attendance at Sunday School.

During the first twelve years of its existence, the St. Vincent de Paul Society was satisfied to remain in the position of a little parish relief-giving society. In this capacity it stood, side by side, with a number of other parish and racial societies. About 1860, the Society launched out into a larger program which caught the imagination of the Catholic people. The first general project that popularized the work of the Society was its Sunday School work. Catholic children in the almshouses were growing up without any instruction in their faith, which was proscribed

in these institutions.¹⁴

Sunday School Work

That one of the special projects launched by the Society in this country should be Sunday School work for children might seem strange in the light of its being a social service agency. Yet this difficulty fades when one remembers the historical background of the times and the peoples involved in their work, as well as recalling that the Society's ideal was to minister to the whole good of the poor.

In the early days of the Republic, about 1857, there did not seem to be any great need for charity of any sort. Hospitals were woefully lacking, but until the arrival of hordes of destitute immigrants, virtually everybody in the country was assured of a living. The poor alien, however, was soon clapped into an almshouse run on the English model, and there he was treated more like a criminal than an object of charity. His children were pounced upon by the new orphanages under public control. And as this control was Protestant, they were vigorously proselytized. Therefore, the first Catholic charities in this country were begun to preserve the Catholic Faith of thousands of children.¹⁵

14 John O'Grady, Catholic Charities in the U. S. (Washington, D. C. National Conference of Catholic Charities, 1931) p. 80.

15 Theodore Maynard, The Story of American Catholicism (New York: Macmillan Co., 1942) p. 590.

Dr. O'Grady states:

The history of the Catholic charities in the United States is almost a history of the struggle of the immigrant¹⁶ for the preservation of the faith of his children.¹⁶

Catholic parishes were as yet insufficiently developed to provide religious instructions for children, and as a result thousands of these children in the poorer sections of our cities were being gathered into Protestant Sunday Schools.

In 1857, the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul Society began a school in Lower Hamilton Street, Albany. It succeeded in rescuing some twenty children from the clutches of the enemies of the faith. After providing clothing, they placed the children in parochial schools. As a means of effectively combating the evil of rescuing children, the Conference decided to open a Sunday School in the rear of 22 Van Zandt Street. Immediately afterwards a night school was established at which the members of the Conference with great self-sacrifice devoted their energies to instructing the children, not only in the mysteries of faith, but also in secular subjects. On February 7, 1861, another Sunday School was opened in the extreme southern section of the parish of the Immaculate Conception, Albany. The attendance here was about forty children. By this time the spirit of intolerance had exhausted itself under political pressure

¹⁶ John O'Grady, Catholic Charities in the U.S., (Washington, D. C. Nat. Conf. of Cath. Charities, 1931) p. 83.

and religious exercises were again permitted in the schools in New York State.¹⁷

During the sixties and seventies, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in New York, Baltimore, and Washington also assisted in the teaching of Sunday Schools. Teaching of Sunday Schools was one of the topics considered at the second national meeting of the Society held in New York in 1865. In an address on this topic, Very Rev. William Starrs, Vicar-General of New York diocese stated:

We understand from the reports given to the New York Council during the year that more could be done-- that there are members in Conferences throughout the country who are not actively employed and they could give their time very profitably for that purpose.¹⁸

Care of Catholic Children

Before 1840, sixteen Catholic institutions for dependent and neglected children had been established in the United States. The care of dependent and neglected children away from their homes was only a part of the work of these institutions.¹⁹

17 St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly, 8:273-274, November, 1903.

18 Ibid., p. 276

19 John O'Grady, Catholic Charities in the United States, (Washington, D. C., National Conference of Catholic Charities, 1931), p. 71.

In fact, in the beginning it was only a small part of their work. Before 1840, the care of dependent and neglected children did not seem to present a problem outside of a few cities like Baltimore, St. Louis, Louisville, New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, since the influx of immigrants had not arrived. However, when the great tide of immigration came there was naturally a very large increase in the number of dependent and neglected children during the next two decades.²⁰

It was about 1862 that the attention of St. Vincent de Paul became aware of the problem of neglected and dependent children and made this one of their special works. A number of Protestant children's aid societies in the eastern cities were engaged in placing children, often Catholics, from eastern cities in Protestant farm homes in the Middle West. The members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul were the first to call attention to this situation. In New York City, where the Children's Aid Society was most active, the Society assumed the leadership in organizing homes for destitute Catholic children. Through the efforts of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, an industrial school for boys in charge of the Christian Brothers was established in Chicago in 1863.²¹

²⁰ John O'Grady, Catholic Charities in the United States, (Washington, D. C., National Conference of Catholic Charities, 1931), p. 243.

²¹ Ibid., p. 245.

The first special work of the Particular Council of the Society of St. Vincent & Paul of New Orleans was the foundation of St. Vincent's Home for Destitute Boys in 1866. This home carried on for four years during which time over eight hundred boys were cared for, educated, taught trades, and thoroughly instructed in religion. There was also established in New Orleans a work called the Patronage of Newsboys for the education and religious training of boys who ran the streets selling newspapers. The inception of this work was made possible by the cooperation of the Jesuit Fathers.

22

In 1870 the Particular Council of the St. Vincent de Paul Society of New York opened a home for boys in an old warehouse on Warren Street. The purpose of the home was to neutralize the influence of the sectarian homes that had been established throughout the city. In 1871, Rev. John C. Drumgoole was appointed Superintendent of the Home and later made it the foundation stone of a whole network of institutions on Staten Island under the auspices of the

23

Immaculate Virgin.

In their efforts to save dependent children to the faith, the members of the Society did not confine themselves

22 St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly, 15:22, February, 1901.

23 Ibid., p. 33.

to the establishment of Catholic institutions. In the late fifties, they made an effort to reach the Catholic children in almshouses and houses of refuge. After the Civil War the barriers in many localities that prevented the Vincentian's entrance to these institutions had been removed. In the early seventies a number of local Societies were very active in providing instruction for Catholic children in public institutions. At the Third General Assembly of the Society held in Philadelphia in 1876, Mr. James Lynch, President of the Superior Council of New York, reported that a number of the members from that city visited Randall's Island regularly and taught their children their catechism and prepared them for their Sacraments. A number of other local branches of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul followed the example of the New York and Brooklyn units in providing religious instruction for Catholic children in public institutions. Beginning in 1890, the members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society of Washington, began teaching catechism to the Catholic boys in the National Training School for Boys. ²⁴

Care of Neglected and Destitute Children

From the very beginning the St. Vincent de Paul Society seems to have had a peculiar penchant for reaching out into the most spiritually neglected groups in the fold.

24 Ibid., 9:18-20, March, 1904.

After the Civil War there was a new awakening on the part of Catholic leaders in regard to the care of destitute and neglected children. The war had increased the number of children who needed care away from their own homes. It had also given Catholics a new sense of importance in the life of the Union. As they had fought for the preservation of the Union and had discharged all the duties of citizenship, why should they be excluded from the rights of citizenship. The war, for the time being at least, dissipated many of the old anti-Catholic prejudices. It aided materially in bridging over the gulf between natives and immigrants.

Under the leadership and inspiration of Dr. Ives, a convert and zealous member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, a society for the protection of destitute Catholic children was organized in May 1866. This new venture had the fullest support and approval of the Archbishop of New York. Within a few weeks after its organization the Society for the Protection of Destitute Catholic Children rented two houses connected by their yards on Thirty-sixth and Thirty-seventh Streets. In these two houses the boys' department of the New York Catholic Protectory had its beginnings.²⁵ Thus, one of the greatest leaders in Catholic lay action was an ardent Vincentian.

25 Ibid., p. 20.

The Church was beginning to feel the pulse of a new life. Laymen were becoming educated and ready for leadership. All they needed was a cause and a leader who could capture their imagination. It was then that the Society threw all its efforts into the program for destitute Catholic children. Dr. Ives believed that what the Catholics of this country needed was a larger institutional program that would supplement existing orphanages. He believed that the Church needed industrial schools throughout the whole land. Industrial schools in every city would save the homeless Catholic youth to the Church and make them better citizens. Archbishop Spalding of Baltimore may be regarded as a co-worker of Dr. Ives in popularizing the movement for Catholic industrial schools. From his wide contacts throughout the country, the Archbishop was well aware of the great losses sustained by the Church through its failure to provide for the dependent, neglected, and delinquent children. In May of 1866, Archbishop Spalding called a meeting of the members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society of Baltimore at which he outlined his plans for an industrial school to be erected there. It was known as St. Mary's Industrial School for Boys. This school opened its doors and received its first boy on October 3, 1866. In a few months, the number of boys increased to forty-five.²⁶

²⁶ John L. Spalding, The Life of the Most Rev. M. J. Spalding, (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1930), pp. 289-290.

In its appeal both for public funds and private contributions, the board of trustees of St. Mary's expressed the hope that in a short time the institution would become self-supporting. For St. Mary's Industrial School as for other schools of its type, the St. Vincent de Paul Society was very much interested in the after care and placement of the boys. In the beginning the boys were apprenticed to labor, but this did not work successfully. They, therefore, adopted the policy of retaining boys until they reached a self-supporting age. It acquired a building downtown to be known as St. James Home, where the boys who had been discharged from the institution might board until such time as they could find work and adjust themselves.²⁷

Prison Work

After the St. Vincent de Paul Society in New Orleans had established a home for boys, the new work to which the Society devoted itself was in connection with prisons and begun in 1871. In 1879 this work was enlarged to include the visiting of the parish prison and the police jail. Prison work was given a prominent place in the program of the Fourth General Assembly of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in the United States held in Washington in 1886.²⁸

²⁷ St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly, 15:51-55, February, 1910.

²⁸ John O'Grady, Catholic Charities in the United States, (Washington, D. C., National Conference of Catholic Charities, 1931), p. 243.

The Society was then making fair headway towards its goal to have Catholic chaplains in penal institutions. After the 1886 meeting prison visitation seemed to have made a powerful appeal to the local Vincentians. It developed some of the most outstanding and consecrated leadership of the Society.²⁹

The Catholic Home Bureau

After 1870 the members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul joined wholeheartedly in the movement to find homes for children in the overcrowded Catholic institutions. The Vincentians from the East looked to their brothers in the West to aid in this matter. Protestant Children's Aid Societies had been able to find homes for children in the Middle West. Why should Catholic institutions not be able to do likewise? Various plans were proposed. Western Conferences might inform Eastern Councils and Conferences of opportunities for placing children. Institutions might be established in the Middle West that would accept children from the East. There was no unanimity of opinion on any plan. Many of the Vincentians were skeptical about any plan for the placement of the children from the East in Middle Western homes. They felt that the Middle West had sufficient problems of its own.

Between 1890 and 1898 there was considerable discussion

29 Ibid., p. 244.

regarding this project. The Vincentian leaders were convinced that something should be done to meet it. They realized that the institution alone could not satisfy all the requirements of child-caring programs. Thus Thomas Mulry and Edmond Butler of New York finally arrived at the idea of organizing the Catholic Home Bureau of New York in the latter part of 1898 under the auspices of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, New York City, New York.

30

The function of the Catholic Home Bureau was thus:

1. To place destitute, dependent, or neglected children in family homes in accordance with the laws of the State of New York, and for that purpose to receive such children by surrender, commitment, or otherwise and to do such other work as may tend to improve the condition of the children.³¹

The Society felt that the institutions were doing a grand work for these children, but that work should be supplemented by an earnest effort on the part of the people to open up to these children, already trained and instructed, the avenues that lead to employment and self-support.

The Bureau established its headquarters at No. 105 E. 22nd Street, New York City, with a representative constantly in attendance. The agent of the Bureau personally visited the homes of these Catholic families who indicated willingness to accept and care for these dependent children.³²

30 St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly, 4:151-153, May, 1899.

31 Ibid., 9:49-50, February, 1899.

32 Ibid., 4: 146-147, May, 1899.

32

In 1905, the Catholic Home Bureau placed in family homes two hundred and forty-five children, and sixty-five percent of the children were under the age of twelve years. An important feature of the work was the visitation of children already placed. On September 30, 1905, they had under actual supervision nine hundred and twenty-six (926) children. Records show that during the year, one thousand six hundred and fifty (1,650) visitations were made. The year's work cost eleven thousand eight hundred and seventy-five dollars and twenty-five cents (\$11,875.25). Of this amount, the St. Vincent de Paul Society contributed four thousand four hundred and fifty dollars (\$4,450) and the City of New York³³ six thousand and three hundred dollars (\$6,300).

The Catholic Home Bureau of New York was the forerunner of a number of similar projects in Catholic child care in the United States. In 1909, the Particular Council in Washington established a Catholic Home Bureau and in 1913 Detroit instituted a similar plan which has become one of the largest and best equipped placing organizations in the United States.

Juvenile Delinquency

A European social institution, conducted by religious women, was imported to Louisville, Kentucky, in 1842. It was known as The Sisters of the Good Shepherd. Its Work is well known, the care and restoration of females, victims of sex

33 Ibid., 11:57-58, February, 1906.

vice. The basic program of the Sisters consists of three elements: religion, work, and education. One cogent fact indicating the extent of this work is that between the years 1857-1877, the New York Good Shepherd agency cared for 7,241 individuals. Another agency was the Sisters of Mercy who cared for women and girls away from home who might be exposed to evil living conditions in cities.

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It was thus that one of the first works of the Society was the spiritual care of Catholic girls and boys in houses of refuge. After these were charitable institutions providing homes for children left homeless by death and other causes of dissolution of the families. Contact with these children naturally led the more far-seeing members of the Society back to the court procedure that brought the children to the institutions. A number of Vincentians were, therefore, very much interested in removing children from the ordinary criminal courts and developing a special procedure for them. Among the outstanding Vincentian leaders in this movement was Judge Timothy Hurley, an active member of the St. Vincent de Paul in Chicago. In the early eighties, Judge Hurley organized the Catholic Visitation and Aid Society in Chicago for the purpose of visiting Catholics in the various public institutions and especially boys in the reform school. By reason of his interest in the care and treatment of juvenile

34 The Catholic World, 13: 209-210, September, 1886.

delinquents, Judge Hurley was appointed a member of the committee that formulated the first juvenile court law for Illinois which the legislature passed in 1899.³⁵ The Juvenile Courts were supposed to deal with the presented cases on an individual basis. In order to do this the courts had to know the special considerations in each case, such as the home conditions surrounding the children, their progress in school, and the manner in which they spent their leisure time. When the laws creating juvenile courts were first enacted, no new officers were added to care for these added responsibilities. They were just given the personnel of the ordinary courts. In order that they might be able to do this work, they were compelled to call upon private agencies including the St. Vincent de Paul Society.³⁶

The St. Vincent de Paul Society in St. Louis in 1904 employed a full time worker as a probation officer for young women and girls in the Juvenile Court. This worker was given charge of the Catholic girls placed on probation. The members of the parish Conferences cooperated with the probation officer in supervising the children under care.³⁷

American Child Welfare

In the latter part of 1908, a group of persons representing child caring agencies and institutions requested

35 St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly, 10:268-273, August, 1905.

36 Ibid., p. 280.

37 Ibid., p. 275.

President Theodore Roosevelt to call a national conference on child welfare. The President refused to consider their petition without the cooperation of Mr. Mulry as a representative of Catholic child caring interests. On President Roosevelt's suggestion the group decided to confer with Mr. Mulry and his name was included in the hundred outstanding citizens petitioning for the conference. When President Roosevelt called the conference which has come to be known as the 1909 White House Conference on Child Welfare to meet in the East Room of the White House, both Mr. Mulry and Mr. Butler took a prominent part in its deliberations. Mr. Butler was a member of the committee on resolutions which brought together the best American experience in child welfare and paved the way for some of the most important developments of subsequent years. Thus the ideals of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul had an opportunity of re-creating the program of American Child Welfare.³⁸ In 1919, the United States Children's Bureau called a conference on child welfare for the purpose of reviewing the ten years' progress since the first White House Conference and to chart the lines of a future program. Mr. Butler, as a representative of the St. Vincent de Paul Society and of Catholic interests, again took an active part in the conference as chairman of its

³⁸ John O'Grady, Catholic Charities in the United States, (Washington, D. C., National Conference of Catholic Charities, 1931), p. 269.

committee on Standards for Children Requiring Special Care.

Relationship Between the St. Vincent de Paul Society
and the Charity Organization Society

The relations between the St. Vincent de Paul Society and the Charity Organization Society form one of the most interesting chapters in Catholic charities in the United States. In the early nineties, the Vincentians of New York City under the leadership of Mr. Mulry decided to affiliate themselves more closely with the Charity Organization Society of that City. A number of them accepted membership on the district committees of the Society. A paper written by Mr. Thomas Mulry on the cooperation of United Charities emphasized the new relations between Catholic and non-Catholic charities. He endeavored to show that the old spirit of proselytism was on the wane. The establishment of the Charity Organization Society, a non-sectarian clearing house, proved the mutual advantages of cooperation.

The Charity Organization opened to the members of the Society an exceptionally rich field of experience. It gave them a clearer understanding of their limitations and their possibilities. They began to recognize that charity work was a cooperative work and that the individual agency

39 John O'Grady, Directory of Catholic Charities, (Washington, D. C., National Conference of Catholic Charities, 1931), p. 270.

40 St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly, 10:314-315, November, 1898.

could no longer work in isolation. Another idea that the Vincentians gathered from their contact was the need of full time workers in order to make the work of the volunteers truly effective. The Vincentians' contact with the Charity Organization Society was bound to have a far-reaching influence on the outlook of St. Vincent de Paul visitors. It opened up to them the channels of communication with a large fund of experience in social work and contacts with some of the best minds in the country.

There were two elements in the program of the Charity Organization Society that especially impressed the Vincentian visitors. The organization set up a central clearing house for all the charities of the community. Why could not the St. Vincent de Paul Society do the same for Catholic charities with its various allied units. A central clearing house would provide information on families moving from one parish to another. It would provide a central point of contact with the other social agencies of the city. It could aid families in parishes in which there was no St. Vincent de Paul Conference. The Society established a central office in Chicago in 1911 as a clearing house for the parish conferences and for emergency cases. At first the members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul were not much impressed by the possibilities of paid service.⁴¹ They were inclined to place themselves on a pedestal above those who were compelled

⁴¹ St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly, 10:318-319
November, 1898.

to accept pay for their work. In the mind of the immigrants charity meant service extended without hope of material reward. The debate in regard to the advisability of paid service in family welfare work was brought to a focus by the establishment under the auspices of the Particular Council of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Central Office with a salaried staff. They began to recognize that in certain work volunteers could not give adequate attention and that services of paid workers were necessary.

Thus is seen in more or less broad outline the trend of development of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in the United States. A more detailed description of its operation and growth is less revealing because of the peculiar structure of the Society. Its original idea of operating through a small unit in a simple personal method, begun by the original eight under the leadership of Frederick Ozensow, has been retained to a large degree. Its beginnings in the United States were as humble as the first Conference in Paris in 1833. Therefore, it can be seen that there was no elaborate system of records from which a detailed and authentic history can be written with facility. Rather the picture as a whole describes the work of the various units. The statistics of the whole organization over a period of years is a most powerful mode of description, though not as articulate as one may desire. A brief description of the organization in its structural set-up, with a compilation of facts will help to

complete the story of this chapter.

The Structure of the Organization

The basic unit is the Parish Conference. That consists of a group of men of that district, who incidentally are familiar with the local circumstances. While the ideal is for a group of young men, practically, however, in many instances where the parish is an older one, many older men are Vincentians, as they like to call themselves. These began membership as young men and have remained devoted to the work over many years. There is a President, Treasurer, and Secretary. All members are known to each other as Brothers. They meet regularly each week. When an appeal for help is received, the President assigns two visitors to the case. With two working on a case there is double observation and there are two points of view. A prudent caution of protection is had as well. They are equipped to care for emergency or temporary care as the case requires. At a subsequent meeting a complete report is given to the Conference and whatever discussion, if any, is open to the whole group. One unique feature of the whole Society that dates back to its inception, is that at the end of each meeting, the Brothers contribute a personal and secret offering of money to help carry on their work. Its other sources of revenue depend on local conditions such as the size and resources of the parish itself. Each unit is not only self-supporting, but it contributes to the Superior units of the

Society for its more general activities. The function of each Conference gives not only direct aid to applicants, but it refers as needs be to other social agencies. It arranges for permanent aid as from the City, County, or State, and in our times from the Federal Government. It further arranges the details for admission of individuals to various institutions and the care of these dependents.

The Particular Council represents an aggregate of the local Conferences in a whole district and is composed of Presidents and Vice Presidents. This Particular Council besides uniting the Conferences composing it, attends to certain more complex works of charity for which the Conferences have not the time. These two groups, the parish conferences and the Particular Council, are a fair cross-section representing the work done by the Society as a whole. Besides the direct work of each Conference with particular families in its district, there are the Special Works done by these two units as a whole.

In a report of the Superior Council it states that it interrogated its Councils for a list of its Special Works. It recognized that there is no uniformity in this phase because they are dependent on local conditions, demands, and the means of securing money for their maintenance.⁴²

⁴² Kathleen O'Heara, Frederick Ozanam, 1833-1933, (New York, New York Catholic School Book Company, 1937), p. 101.

The following is the list of Special Works which the Society as a whole performs:

1. Hospital and institutional visitations.
2. Summer vacations for children of the poor.
3. Big Brother work for neglected boys.
4. Placing orphan and abandoned children in foster homes.
5. Probation work for juvenile delinquents.
6. Seaman's relief.
7. Cooperation with civic organizations, whose objects are the common good of the community.⁴³

The Central Council is the next superior group. It represents an aggregate of Particular Councils. This is usually in a large city where there are many and varied special works to be done. The Superior Council is the national body representing the whole Society in the nation. The Council-General is the highest body of authority for the Society throughout the world.⁴⁴

Some idea of the growth of the Society can be gleaned from the following figures:

In the ten years following the establishment of the First Conference at St. Louis on February 2, 1846, but seven Conferences were aggregated to the Council General in Paris, with about seventy-five members. There are no figures to tell of the visitations made or money expended.⁴⁵

However, there were some figures compiled by the Superior Council of the United States for the year 1932 and

⁴³ St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly, 5:79-80, February, 1900.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 6:103-104, March, 1900

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 196.

contained in its publication for the Centennial Celebration which was held in 1933, entitled: Frederick Ozanam Accepted the Challenge of 1833, published in New York, October 1, 1933.

Summary

Membership

Central Councils	6
Particular Councils	92
Conferences	8,380
Active Members	30,000

Works

Families Assisted	143,727
Visitations	1,473,007
Visits to Institutions	65,587
Situations Procured	13,084

Financial Report

Collections at Weekly Meetings	\$ 197,572.84
Total Receipts	5,593,029.86
Total Expenditures	5,587,115.72
Special Works by Particular Councils ...	591,780.93

Thus it was that the St. Vincent de Paul Society took hold and grew in the United States during a most important period in the growth of the nation itself. It can be truly said that it was immigration that poured new blood into the veins of the growing democracy of the West. It was the Society of St. Vincent de Paul with other social agencies that helped to care for these bewildered immigrants when

their needs were greatest. The Society grew up with the Nation.

Chapter 3

The Beginnings of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Boston

The story of the beginnings of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Boston is a replica of its origins elsewhere-- great needs of the poor, material and spiritual. It must be remembered that the greatest influx of Irish immigrants to the United States was between the years 1840-1860. In the seven year period, 1847-1854 includes 1,186,929 Irish immigrants. About one-half of this number settled in Boston as¹ the city offered new avenues of opportunity.

As stated elsewhere, the practise of this group was to cluster in urban centers. Since Boston was not only a city but a port of debarcation, a very large proportion of the Irish immigrants settled here. As Dr. O'Grady points out, a study of the evolution of Social Work in the United States requires attention to the racial tradition of the Germans and Irish because they constituted the largest element of the earlier im-²migration.

The reason for the heavy outpouring of emigrees from Ireland between 1847-1854 was the well known potato famine.

¹ John O'Grady, Catholic Charities in the U.S. (Washington, D.C. National Conference of Catholic Charities 1930) p. 39.

² Ibid., p. 42. 50

This was the year 1847. As a result, that year, Irish immigration doubled that of any previous year. It numbered 105,536. It rose in succeeding years, reaching its crest in 1851 with 221,253.³

The point of these statements is that distress from famine and poverty drove these people to America. They brought with them social problems for the Church and State. Weakened by suffering at home they were unready for the arduous journey to the United States. Thousands died on the way. A Senate investigating committee found that in the last four months of 1853, two percent of the total passengers, (1,933 passengers) died at sea, while two and a half percent of those who landed had to be placed in hospitals.⁴

Another most important point in the background of this record, is the social conditions existing in Boston during this period. It is sad to recall that the 1850's saw racial and religious bigotry at a high pitch. The Irish Catholics were the target of this shameful intolerance. Street riots broke out from time to time. The Know Nothing Party was

³ John O'Grady, The Catholic Church and the Destitute, (New York City, New York, The Macmillan Company 1929) p. 56.

⁴ Francis Lane, American Charities and The Child of the Immigrant, (Washington, D.C., The Catholic University of America 1932) p. 12.

in power. Various committees from the State Government in-
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 vestigated Catholic institutions.

These facts intimate the atmosphere breathed by the Irish Immigrants arriving in Boston during this period. They needed friends.

The principle centre of Catholics in Boston in 1861 was known as the South Cove, the section where is now the leather district and the South Station. The most important Catholic Church then was located here, namely, St. James Church. Reverend John J. Williams was its pastor. Within a few years he was to be Boston's first Archbishop. Well did he know the problems, social and religious of his people. His parish was growing in leaps and bounds, numerically at least, but its ratio of poor and sick grew much too rapidly. The reason once more was the Irish immigrants poor as well as
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 ill.

Greatly impressed with the good work which had been done and was being done by the different conferences of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and realizing the great benefits

5 Ibid., p. 16.

6 William Leahy, Archdiocese of Boston in the History of the Catholic Church in the New England States, (Boston, Massachusetts, Macmillan Company 1899) pp. 49-50.

that would result from the establishment of the Society in Boston, Reverend Father Williams visited New York in the spring of 1861. There he learned from the pastor of St. Peter's Church the workings of the Conferences attached to that parish, which had been organized in 1856.⁷ On his return to Boston he called together a small number of his parishioners and after this meeting a conference of St. Vincent de Paul was formed on April 18, 1862. Prior to this date there had been an isolated gathering of men calling themselves a Conference but no records are in existence of their work which evidently was abandoned.⁸

Unfortunately there are no records of any kind to state explicitly what works this new group accomplished save for a bare statement in the Archives, viz;

During the five remaining months the Conference expended \$115.00, and continued dispensing relief.⁹

However one can easily infer that this new Conference continued in the spirit of Frederick Ozanam. The new conference was duly incorporated in 1862 with the Society's General Council

7 Archives of St. Vincent de Paul, p. 12.

8 Archives of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, p. 3.

9 Ibid., p. 8.

in Paris and hence must have pledged itself to the ideals of its charity work. Since visitations to the homes of the distressed with immediate emergency relief to be proffered was a primary function of the Society as a whole, one can feel sure that this new Conference carried on with new enthusiasm. Then again, their work must have been so successful as to attract attention since within two years, two new Conferences were started in adjacent Parishes; namely at the Cathedral Parish in Boston proper and Sts. Peter & Paul in South Boston. There were now three Conferences organized and on December 5, 1865 a meeting of the Spiritual Directors and officers of these Conferences was held. It was at this meeting that a letter from the Superior Council was read which authorized the formation of a Particular Council and it was also decided that weekly visitations to the homes be made. There are no records which indicate the exact function of these three conferences. ¹⁰

Formation of the Particular Council

The work of these young conferences must have been highly successful because a Particular Council was formed in ¹¹ December 1865. No official acceptance of a new Particular

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 10.

¹¹ Archives of the St. Vincent de Paul; p. 8.

Council in Boston could have been made by the Society's head in Paris had there not been official approval of the Conferences' achievements known from reports submitted. In this country at least, can be found no copies of those reports to the International body that the Society's rules require.

Now with the Particular Council functional there are reports that give light on its activities. The first meeting of the Particular Council was held in the Chapel of the Holy Cross in 1866, with five Conferences participating. It was then decided to meet on the First Thursday of each month in the Chapel of Holy Cross. One subject discussed is known from the following excerpt:

The subject of issuing relief checks was taken into consideration and it was suggested that the relief checks be made of brass instead of paper. The advantage was, they thought it would greatly facilitate the business at meetings and would also accomodate the poor. With the checks, they would not be obliged to go to any particular place but could exchange them for groceries at the nearest store.¹²

This interesting item is another instance of the human way in which the Society tried to dispense relief. Evidently, the brass check idea was a system arranged with grocers and other commodity dealers. It seemed to accomodate their purposes better and with efficiency.

¹² Ibid., p. 11

The meetings of the Particular Council were held at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross until 1887 at which date they then were held in the parlors of the Catholic Union and a room had been secured in the same building for the purpose of keeping the records of the Society, and was also available for such other office work as might develop in the future.

The first published report of the society was issued by the Particular Council on January 1, 1869 and covered the work of the society for the year 1868.

The first report extant of the Particular Council is for the year ending December 31, 1869. From it one can gather an idea of the progress made in seven years.

One salient fact is that the \$115.00 expended in the first four months of the First Conferences existence had grown¹³ to the amazing total of \$48,741.09 expended in eight years.

In the year 1869 alone, a total of \$13,044.76 was spent, for food, clothing and shelter of poor families. Visitation to homes totaled more than twenty thousand (20,000) while one thousand seven hundred and fifty-eight (1,758) persons had been helped. These are slim reports yet no others are extant.

¹³ Archives of the St. Vincent de Paul Society; Annual Report of the Particular Council, December 31, 1869.

It is interesting to note also how this revenue was
¹⁴
gathered in the year 1869.

Receipts

Collected from Conference members at weekly meetings	\$ 4,537.86
Donations	711.32
Collections in Churches	1,625.18
Other unnamed sources	<u>6,055.84</u>
Total	12,930.20

The Care of Dependent Children

After the cholera epidemic of 1831, Catholic Boston saw, more clearly than before, its need for an orphan asylum. Accordingly, in the following year, St. Vincent's Female Orphan Asylum was opened under the charge of three Sisters of Charity. Besides caring for orphans, the Asylum gave free instruction to hundreds of girls. The character of the asylum was in time gradually changed and it became more of a home for orphans, without ceasing entirely to be a free school. The epidemic of 1852 threw many helpless children under the care of the asylum and the authorities of the institution decided to construct a larger building since they were so crowded, it was necessary for the children to sleep on the floor. With the aid of fairs and a gift of twelve thousand dollars (\$12,000) from Andrew Carney, a wealthy Irish Catholic, an imposing structure was

erected. Up to 1870 three thousand girls had been cared for at St. Vincent's which offered good facilities for industrial training. During its first twenty-five years, one thousand, one hundred and eighty-seven children entered the institution. ¹⁵

The St. Vincent de Paul Society took the above as one of its special works, the care of dependent and neglected children. In this work the agent cooperated with the Home for Destitute Catholic Children and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. The various Conferences of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Boston had been grappling with the problem of destitute children for some time but had accomplished little on account of their limited funds. However the society was financially responsible for the children they placed in the Home for Destitute Catholic Children and would pay the board of these children. The Home for Destitute Catholic Children was established May, 1864, as an expansion of the Eliot Charity School. Its actual founding resulted from the deliberations of the Boston Sunday School superintendents who were moved by the plight of the destitute in this city. At first, the institution was under the care of laywomen, but they were succeeded by the Sisters of Charity shortly afterwards. The permanent home on Harrison Avenue was not completed until

¹⁵ Francis E. Lane, American Charities and the Child of the Immigrant, (Washington, D.C., The Catholic University of America, 1932), p. 109.

1871. As an indication of the methods by which the children were rescued, the Superintendent of the Home toured through squalid districts and visited courts with the result that he was able to save two hundred and forty children from public institutions. By 1880, there had passed through the home four thousand and eighty-two (4,082) children, besides thousands who were assisted by outdoor relief.¹⁶

This institution was part of the general movement of protection for Catholic children against the efforts of misguided philanthropy and it was influenced, no doubt, by the policies of the neighboring agencies that have made Massachusetts celebrated in the field of child placing. Specifically, the Home traced its origin to the desire of Catholics not to be outdone by the home-placing societies in their labors for children. With the rapid increase of the population from immigration in those days, the charitable societies saw that state institutions were insufficient for the needs of destitute children. The Home, therefore, was founded for destitute children who were not considered sheltered by existing institutions. Thus it was that the Vincents found many children in their visits around the city who were abandoned by their parents or orphaned.

16 Ibid., p. 112

From a report of the Home for Destitute Catholic Children as giving an instance of the Society's work among these helpless dependents, is the following statement:

The members of the St. Vincent de Paul Conferences connected with several churches in the city, also deserve the warmest thanks for the aid they have rendered the association, by their watchfulness in bringing to the notice of the Managers many cases of destitution and neglect of little children, met with by members in their visits of charity to the wretched abodes of many families seeking relief from the Conferences. With the inauguration of the Special Works department of the Society, this work for destitute children, as well as the relief of the immigrant in general, was put on a well organized basis.¹⁷

Work for Infant Children

In their visits to the poor, the Vincentians sometimes found an infant whose care was the solicitude of a dying or destitute mother, or perhaps abandoned. None of the Conferences could assume the support of such children, in addition to the worthy poor on their relief rolls, therefore the board of these infants was paid from the common funds of the Society of the Particular Council. Thus was the work for infants first taken up in the city by the St. Vincent de Paul aided by the Sisters

17 St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly, 10:138-139, 1904

of Charity at the Carney Hospital, who fitted up a portion of the old Mansion House for this purpose. This was the beginning of a work which developed in later years, and after many periods of anxiety and almost disaster has materialized in that noble institution, St. Mary's Infant Asylum.

The year 1854 saw the establishment of St. Mary's
18
Asylum for Widows, Foundlings and Infants. Previous to this time, all these classes were cared for in the hospital by the St. Vincent de Paul Society while the older children were sent to orphanages. The Vincentians endeavored, by keeping in touch with the maternity hospitals, to have the infants born therein of Catholic mothers, baptized. They likewise arranged to have Catholic infants adopted by Catholic families and institutions, to give temporary aid to mothers and infants, to provide private families where infants may be boarded, and to place mothers in institutions where they could have their infants with them.

Twenty-five Years Growth

It is possible to piece together from the next bare report available how the Society's work in Boston was expanding.

The report of December 31, 1885 shows that there were

18 Francis E. Lane, American Charities and the Child of the Immigrant, (Washington, D.C., The Catholic University of America 1932) p. 112.

five hundred and thirteen (513) active members in the Society at Boston that year.

The amount of total expenditure was \$23,932.74 for that year alone. The last previous report for the year 1869 had showed an expenditure of some \$13,000. In that report also was a notation that some \$48,000 had been spent in the first eight years. Now for the year 1885 alone, half of that sum had been spent.

Another interesting item on this latest report (1885) reveals that the total amount spent by the Society to date since its inception was \$403,317.80.¹⁹ Considering that twenty-five years was the Society's age now and how it had started with nothing, these figures cannot measure the amount of charity dispensed. Every dollar spent meant several visitations made. Both of these measure in a vague way at least, the relief experienced, the hearts and hopes lifted from the depressing despair of poverty, when these successors of Vincent darkened the door of the poor.

Juvenile Offenders

Massachusetts has been called the "home of probation." The Commonwealth's claim to so honorable a title rests upon the

19 Annual Reports of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, 1885.

initial development in the practices of its criminal courts of a discrimination in the disposition of cases, by which the offender was placed under supervision instead of in confinement. The practice antedates the statutes, which have progressively clothed the courts with authority and have placed upon them definite duties in carrying out a broadly humane but still strongly correctional purpose. The statutes have indeed been chiefly the record of an accomplished idea, giving it legal operation and extending its effect into a uniform system.

Before there were records, there were humane persons who appeared in the Boston Police Court, assumed responsibility for persons accused of crime and came to be informally recognized as probation officers. After the district courts had been equipped with a probation system, the Superior Court for a period had it informally, cases being continued from term to term, and the deputy sheriffs being bondsmen for defendants, with a personal obligation to supervise their conduct and surrender them in case they did not justify the confidence placed in them.

Court Work

As a result of a discussion on the cases of destitute

20 Probation Manual, Issued by the Massachusetts Board of Probation, 7th edition, August 1936, p. 5.

children at one of the meetings in 1827 it was determined to employ an agent to attend the courts, police stations, and jails or other places he might be called, to take charge of such children. This work was inaugurated March 1, 1832. The Conferences promptly donated five percent of their gross receipts for the necessary expenses and Mr. Richard Keefe, at that time Probation Officer at the Courts, was engaged to perform the duties as agent. This was the first innovation of a paid worker.

At this time the Overseers of the Poor gave the Society free rent in the Charity Building, thus placing the Society in immediate touch with the public charity offices and the agents of most of the benevolent societies of the city. The success as an experiment was most gratifying. Some of these children were taken from courts, from intemperate and desolate homes and some from homes of bad repute. In employing a competent man to give his whole time to the work, the Society gained information it would be nearly impossible to procure otherwise. Many of the boys were placed in the House of the Angel Guardian.

Prior to this time (1837), Father Haskins, a convert from Episcopalianism, had gained much experience in charitable activities in connection with his labors as chaplain in the public institutions in Boston. While working among the flock of St. John's Church, Father Haskins was drawn to the project of doing something for Catholic orphans and destitute boys.

In this connection the biographer of Father Haskins has the following to say:

It may be truly said that it was at this period of his life that he first conceived the idea of founding an institution which should shelter, educate and train to virtue homeless, destitute and orphan children, and receive other lads whom their parents for one reason or another, were unable to care for properly at home.²¹

A glance at the times will show us that such an institution was sorely needed. At this period it was commonly believed that a House of Refuge should be furnished for these neglected boys. Bishop Fitzpatrick placed Father Haskins in charge of this work. With the cooperation of the members of St. Vincent de Paul Society, Fr. Haskins received \$1700.00 from a Cathedral collection. He bought a small frame building in Moon Street Court with accommodations for thirty-five boys. In 1860 the Home provided for four hundred boys, many of whom were placed by the Vincentians who have always ardently supported this institution which is now known as the House of the Angel Guardian.²²

²¹ Francis E. Lane, American Charities and the Child of the Immigrant, (Washington, D. C., The Catholic University of America 1932) p. 111.

²² Ibid., p. 113

These divisions of Child-Saving Work were known as the Special Works of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Boston. It called for the expenditure of about four thousand dollars yearly in salaries, printing, telephone, carfares, et cetera. A portion of this went to pay the salary of an agent who supervised the girls who were placed on probation by the Court. In order to meet this expenditure, an appeal was made every December which was generously supported.

Protection of Immigrant Girls

At a meeting of the Particular Council of the St. Vincent de Paul Society during the winter of 1895, one of the members reported the fact that it was a matter of frequent occurrence for flashily dressed women to attend the arrival of steamers landing immigrant girls at East Boston. Their purpose was to engage young girls, ostensibly for services as domestics but really for immoral purposes. At this time the Vincentians felt something should be done to check this gross wrong.

A committee of the Society was appointed to investigate and to report on the subject. The committee after spending one month in visiting arriving ships and observing the manner of caring for passengers, especially young women, reported there was no evidence found that would justify the complaint, but suggested it would be a good plan to have a meeting with the Charitable Irish Society, which was established

in the last century for the care of the few Irish immigrants of that time, and to act jointly with that society in giving the matter of today's immigration a careful study, and from this study to be able to recommend such action as might be found necessary and advisable in the interest of Irish immigrants now landing at Boston.

A joint committee of both societies met and agreed that the Charitable Irish Society should pay any expense involved in the proposed inquiry, (one hundred dollars appropriated, provisionally), and the St. Vincent de Paul Society should send their office clerk, a young woman, to the docks to attend the arrival of ships of the Cunard and the Allan Lines until the first of September when the immigration for the year would practically close or become very light.

On the twentieth of February, Miss McGerty, clerk in the St. Vincent de Paul Society's office, was detailed to attend the arrival of the ships, and directed to report, in writing, to the St. Vincent de Paul once a month, until the close of the month of August, when a summary of the monthly reports would be made up and used in a general statement to the Joint Committee. Officers from the St. Vincent de Paul attended the arrival of some of the ships personally so they might, themselves, become familiar with the subject under inquiry.

The clerk's reports show that she had attended to the duty from the twenty-sixth of February to the end of August, being present at landing of passengers from thirty-six ships of the Cunard and Allan Lines, which brought 10,724 steerage passengers, about one-third of this number being females.²³

The Immigration laws of the United States were very strict; they forbade admission into the country of all idiots, insane, persons, paupers or persons likely to become a public charge, besides naming other classes also forbidden, and the Inspectors were charged with the duty of examining all persons landing (this examination included a physical examination by the United States Surgeons) and to hold them back for deportation, unless it could be shown plainly they were entitled to be landed under the laws of the United States.

After passing the Inspectors and the Doctors, the passengers submitted their baggage for inspection of the Custom House officials, and were then free to depart. At this stage, the clerk, wearing a white badge on which were printed the names of the Charitable Irish and the St. Vincent de Paul Societies, went among the steerage passengers, seeking particularly to speak with the young women, inquiring where they were

23 Archives of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, p. 57.

going, and giving them some useful suggestions when needed. By Miss McGerty's memorandum, it appeared she spoke with some²⁴ 2,945 persons, mostly women.

It was found as a rule, except in rare exceptions, all the women came on prepaid ticket, bringing with them the address of their friends on cards provided them by ticket agents before they left Ireland. As a rule, the friends of the passengers were on the dock ready to greet them when they had passed the Inspectors.

On occasions when a ship arrived later than expected or when the ship made an unusually quick trip, it happened that some of the girls had no one waiting at the dock to meet them. In such cases the clerk sent the girls, and their baggage, in carriages in care of drivers well known to her, to the residence of their friends, in or near the city. Ships, often arrived in the summer time on Sundays, when perhaps, no train would be available before the next morning. Thus, suitable and convenient lodgings were found, close to the dock, and the girl was sent off the next day.

In that year there were 2,945 persons spoken with: Seventy women were specially directed and advised as to reaching

24 Archives of St. Vincent de Paul Society, p. 87.

their destination; Fifty-six being given in care of trust-worthy drivers of carriages, ten placed in lodgings over night and put on the train the next day, six taken personally by Miss McGarty and left at the homes of their friends, three taken direct to steam cars and placed in care of the conductor of the train, and a few Protestant women, taken to the Young Women's Christian Association's House and left there.²⁵

It was found, as a rule, all the girls had some money besides their passage tickets, and where they had money, they paid for their own lodgings, meals and carfare. The whole direct and incidental expense of the work from February to September was \$19.22 exceptions made for the telephone installed in the St. Vincent de Paul Society's office, made necessary by the extra time used in the Immigration work.

A great deal of work was done for the employment of these girls. Most of the situations obtained were for domestic help. The names of three hundred women was registered and for fifty-five, positions were found.²⁶

Experience taught the Society that few girls were ready to take places immediately at landing. Naturally they

²⁵ Archives of St. Vincent de Paul Society, Report of the Particular Council in Boston, p. 89.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 135

wished to visit their friends and be equipped with suitable clothes before looking for work as they creditably desired to make a good appearance when applying for situations. The Clerk made one hundred and ninety visits to the girls after they left the ships, sometimes at the homes of their friends, and sometimes in the situations that had been found for them.

After a conference with the representatives of the Cunard and Allan Steamers, as well as with the Commissioner of Immigration, Mr. Delahanty, who gave Miss McGerty every opportunity and many kind courtesies, it was decided that the St. Vincent de Paul Society and the Charitable Irish Society should²⁷ continue this constructive work. These two agencies continued this special work until 1921 at which time the Catholic Charitable Bureau established the Immigrant Welfare Department. This Department consisted of an advisory board made up of the Director of the Catholic Charitable Bureau and priests representing nationalities most concerned with the problem of immigration. Thus the St. Vincent de Paul Society labored for forty-seven years with the Care of Immigrant Girls.

²⁷ Annual Report of the Joint Committee of the Charitable Irish Society and the St. Vincent de Paul: "Protection for Irish Immigrant Girls landing in the Port of Boston," (Boston, Massachusetts, Keenan Printer 1896) p. 5.

Instruction of Children in Institutions

In 1883 a new work was inaugurated entitled Instruction of Children in their religion in Charitable and Penal Institutions. This new work commenced at Deer Island, at which institution regular church services were also held. Sunday school work which was established in 1882, had in 1886 sixteen conferences, represented by seventy members, engaged in the work either of teaching, supplying clothing and shoes or looking after absentees.

Care of Discharged Inmates from Concord Reformatory

In September 1900 the care of boys from the Parental School at West Roxbury was inaugurated. Cubberley in his Essay on Education defines a Parental School as the following:

To this school those who cannot be controlled in the disciplinary classes may be sent. Incorrigible pupils from all the schools of a county are sometimes sent to one county parental school.

These inmates were visited by members of the various conferences, surrounded by good influences, employment obtained and encouraged to adjust themselves in the community. To ascertain also the

28 Annual Reports of the Special Works of the Society, p. 85.

29 Ellwood P. Cubberley, History of Education in the United States, (Boston, Massachusetts, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), p. 568

causes of their commitment and endeavor to destroy those causes in every way--this and other kindred work increased beyond their original conception. Three sub-committees were formed, one having charge of court cases, another, the cases of all children in and out of office, and the other having charge of the discharged inmates from the Reformatory and Parental School. Besides the Central court, the courts at East Boston, South Boston, Roxbury and Dorchester were visited. Owing to the wide spread interest in these minors who became amenable to the law, special sessions of the court were provided to hear these cases and in Boston, Juvenile Court sessions were established. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul was the only Catholic organization in Massachusetts that had representatives and agents in the court in the interests of these children. All these cases were investigated and the different points of the trials followed by the agents, who concerned themselves until the final outcome.

In 1906 the new Boston Juvenile Court was established. It is administered on the assumption that the fundamental function of a Juvenile Court is to put each child who comes before it in a normal relation to society as promptly and as permanently as possible, and that while punishment is not by any means to be disposed with, it is to be made subsidiary and

subordinate to that function.

This act shall be liberally construed and to the end--that as far as practicable (children) shall be treated, not as criminals, but as children in need of aid, encouragement and guidance. Proceedings against children under this act shall not be deemed to be criminal proceeding.³¹

The officials of the Court believe it is helpful to think of themselves as physicians in a dispensary. There are no uniformed officials. The Statute establishing the Court provides that so far as possible the court shall hear all cases in chambers, i.e. in the Judges private room. The presence of the clerk and stenographer is dispensed with and the probation officer is the only Court Attendant ever in the room. Thus the child receives every consideration and all cases are based on an individual basis.

Thus it was that the Vincentians became interested in children who came before the Court and it was imperative that some woman Catholic agent or representative should be present at the sessions of the Court. Non-Catholic societies were well represented, and in the exigency, the Society was obliged to act

³⁰ Harvey Baker, "Proceedings of Boston Juvenile Court" Survey, 23:643-644, 1910.

³¹ General Laws in Massachusetts State 1906, p. 2.

quickly, as the children were being placed in the care of those not of their faith. A competent and experienced woman was hired to look after the interests of Catholic girls whose offences brought them within the jurisdiction of the Court.

Day Nursery

In 1908 the Society became interested in the Day Nursery. The modern day nursery is the descendant of the French creche, the first of which was opened in Paris in 1844 for the daytime care of the babies and young children of working mothers. From France, in which the creche developed not only as an institution for the day time care of children but also as a center for fighting infant mortality and teaching hygiene to parents, the day nursery idea spread to other countries. In the United States the first day nursery was opened in New York in 1854.

The term day nursery as used in this country stands for an institution having one primary purpose--namely, the day care of children who remain part of the family unit but who for social or economic reasons cannot receive ordinary parental care.³²

It was thus that in 1905 this new work was founded by

³² John E. Anderson, Report of the Committee on the Infant and Pre-school Child, (New York City, N.Y., The Century Company, 1932) p. 35.

St. Peter's Conference, Dorchester, Mass. also its. After making it a success, the Conference within a year turned it over to a committee especially formed for the work, and was thus aided by the Sisters from St. Mary's Orphan Asylum. There is no record⁷² which indicates that there were any other day nurseries.

One of the difficulties of drawing a picture of the Society's work in Boston is the lack of published reports. While it is true that latterly official reports have been published regularly, these amount to statistics for the most part. It is from knowing the spirit and ideals of the Society and joining them with the cold figures that a lively representation of it can be had.

The report of the year ending September 30, 1912 is the nearest to one that culminates the fifty year period of existence. That report is merely a statement of figures, leaving untold a description of its human relations. That report shows that \$45,044.69 was spent. Comparing it with the twenty-fifth year report, observe that there is a one hundred percent increase in money spent. Therefore it is safe to assume that there must have been a proportionate ratio of increase in the visitations made, persons helped and in general

33 Archives of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, p.256.

the distress relieved.³⁴ That fifty-year report also announces a figure of \$1,228,790.86 as being the total amount spent through the year. That figure triples the amount reported³⁵ twenty-five years previous, which was \$403,817.80.

The latter period too had seen a large decrease in immigration of the poverty stricken. It was likewise a period of great material prosperity for the Irish Catholics of Boston. Therefore, it would seem that the work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society would be lessened. However it was not. The reason being that its work was broadening in scope, advancing with the fast developing work of Social Science in general.

Finally, the report of the year 1929, gives an idea of the work of more recent times. In Boston on the date of September 30, 1929, the following figures show:

Membership

Active Workers	2,567
Families aided in 1929	5,559
Visitations made	46,429

Financial Report

Receipts from all sources	\$212,848.05
Total Expenditures (1929)	208,157.00

34 Archives of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, p. 317.

35 Archives of St. Vincent de Paul Society in Boston, p. 456-57.

Chapter 4

The Modern St. Vincent de Paul Society in Boston--Its Present Function

The Volunteer Vincentian and The Trained Worker

As has been indicated in the first chapter, the work of caring for distressed humanity has evolved into a science. Wider knowledge, time and means, have permitted those with philanthropic and charitable programs, to become objective. The philosophy of man's obligations to man has clarified to this remarkable degree--all agree on the fundamental principle that an obligation exists. Whatever differences there are as to motive, or as to the name that the execution of this obligation is to take is in reality purely subjective. Work is to be done, they agree, man needs help; let us do it with reflection, with intelligence; do it wisely efficiently. This is the fruit gathered from experience. The case worker is a product of the evolving Social Science. It means a trained worker, a full time professional who gives full time to the task, hence a paid worker.

The Vincentian is essentially a volunteer worker in social work. There are two types of volunteers. First, there are individuals who give their services directly to an agency employing a staff of professional workers and carry on immediately under its supervision. Secondly, there are groups

of volunteers who undertake work on their own responsibility, who may indeed come into contact with and under the influence of professional workers but are not directly supervised by them. The Vincentian is in the latter class. The services that the Volunteer Vincentian renders to the client and professional case workers are numerable. First, it is safe to say that without the material assistance which many of our Vincentians are able to provide it would be most difficult if not impossible for our professional workers to function on an efficient basis. Many resources are open to the Vincentian which would be closed to the Professional worker; and the use of these resources may often be the deciding factor in the successful handling of a case. One of the greatest services the volunteer can render to the professional work is that of interpreting the program of social work to the general public. From the beginning professional social work has been largely suspected. There has been a tendency among many people to seize on every mistake of policy or practice as an unanswerable argument for the condemnation of the whole movement. Volunteers are in a particularly strategic position to give to the public the kind of interpretation that will not only meet objections but will win the needed understanding and support. The volunteer is in a position to learn at first hand exactly what social work is attempting and the methods it is using. Therefore, he is in a position to reach the public at large and particularly the

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bitterest critics of social work. The spirit of the Vincentian is young. A knowledge of its history clearly shows how his society was ever adapting itself to new and changing evolutions, changing as needs be with circumstances.

The functioning today of the organization known as the Catholic Charitable Bureau is a result of modern needs. These are centers of Catholic social agencies operating in a single city. They are manned by trained and paid workers. It is interesting to note that the organization of these modern groups is largely due to the St. Vincent de Paul Society. The Particular Council in a city had city wide contacts with various agencies. It saw the need of coordination. In Baltimore, for example, the Particular Council inaugurated a three-fold service in one group, namely, family relief, child placing and protective care. Formerly these had three separate agencies. Here was coordinated the three basic elements of the later¹ programs of Catholic Charities elsewhere.

On the point of trained workers it is observed, too, that so far back as 1912 there were begun at Loyola University in Chicago special courses of instruction in social work. At the same university a department in Sociology with major em-

¹ John O'Grady: Catholic Charities in the U. (Washington, D. C., National Conference of Catholic Charities, 1930). p. 437.

phasis on social work was opened in 1914.

Bureaus of Catholic Charities began to be established about twenty years ago. Since then diocesan bureaus of charity have come to be recognized as part of the organization of the Church throughout this country. The purpose for which these agencies were founded was first of all to coordinate the various charitable activities and to bring them into a definite plan and system. The second function was that of raising the standards of the work being done to the highest possible level by introducing the best methods that social work had developed. Through the staff of professional case workers it was hoped that an adequate program of family rehabilitation would be developed which would combine the best methods of social case work with the traditional spirit of Catholic Charity; and it was further hoped that the placing of children hitherto carried on largely without definite policies and often without thorough investigation, would be established on the basis of recognition of the prime importance of family life and consideration of the needs of the individual child.

From what has been said it will be clear that these two types of agencies, volunteer and professional do not compete with each other; rather they are complementary, each forming an integral part in the whole scheme of Catholic Charity.

2 Proceedings of National Conference of Catholic Charities, 1914, pp. 55-72.

When professional staffs first made their appearance in Catholic work, in some places a certain antagonism appeared between them and the volunteer groups, based for the most part on the failure of each to understand the other's function and possibilities. However, that has disappeared in great measure, as there has developed a more understanding attitude on both sides. In fact, we have come to a realization that the two are so closely related and so inter-dependent that only when complete harmony and cooperation exists between them can the work of each be effectively accomplished.

Relationship Existing Between the St. Vincent
de Paul in Boston and the Catholic Charitable
Bureau

In point of time the Society of St. Vincent de Paul antedates the Boston Catholic Charitable Bureau. In considering the relationship between the two agencies an essential difference should be noted. The members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul are for the most part volunteers, whereas, the workers of the Boston Catholic Charitable Bureau are almost entirely trained and professional. However, this essential difference would not seem to preclude cooperation or co-relation since there is need for both types of workers and activities in the field of Catholic Charities and the work of one agency would seem to very well complement the work of the other.

The St. Vincent de Paul member does not usually have

the same time or opportunity to devote to his work that the full time professional worker has. This makes it easier for the latter to contact various public agencies in the interest of the Catholic families that come to their attention. Then too, it seems to be more properly the concern of the full time worker to deal with situations which require a prolonged term of attention. The Vincentian might well turn to the professional worker for assistance on such cases.

. In the Archdiocese of Boston, Family Welfare is the main field in which the Bureau of Catholic Charities and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul work cooperatively. Recently an experiment has been made which has proved to be very successful. Once a month there is a District meeting of the St. Vincent de Paul. All the local Conferences in one particular suburb gather together with the Professional Worker from the Catholic Charitable Bureau. This Worker interprets to the Vincentian just what her agency represents and her contribution and there have been plans made whereby a closer relationship between the two is able to exist. It has been recognized at these meetings that the professional staff of the Catholic Charitable Bureau may offer services, semi-psychiatric services, placement of children, infant maternity work and cooperation with public and other private agencies. The Vincentian through the direction and assistance of the professional worker, can assume responsibility for cases not requiring too specialized

skill. These services may be religious counselling to individuals or families within the parish, supplementary financial assistance to marginal incomes, to public relief recipient such as Aid to Dependent Children, Old Age Assistance, or Aid to the Blind cases, and assistance in obtaining medical or dental care.

The values inherent in this relationship cannot be estimated. The professional worker has developed an appreciation of the intimate concern the Vincentian has for his neighbor, obtains a knowledge of the resources of the particular parish, thereby gaining leads to a development or future use of the resources. Often the wisdom of experience which the Vincentian brings to a professional worker is superior and, vice versa, the skills of casework can be shared with the volunteer.

The Vincentian has learned to accept the need for an intensive and enduring relationship between client and worker where a solution for a deeply emotional problem is hoped for, realizing his own time limitation. He has further learned the efficacy of proper budgeting, of the use of resources which will save him time and money. He seeks the services of the Social Service Exchange to assist him in referral to the proper agency, and also develops an interest in community planning outside his own parish. The Vincentian develops a pride in the proper functioning of his parish conference, the Society and the Bureau.

The soundness of the relationship of the Particular Council of St. Vincent de Paul and the Catholic Charitable Bureau has been admitted by all jurisdictions. It has stood the well-honored test of time. Today it gives its people both spiritual and material aid so necessary to their development and well-being. The history of both agencies and the wise counselling of its leaders, has proven that co-relation between both agencies is entirely possible.

Functions of the Particular Council in Boston

In discussing the function of the Central Office of the Particular Council one must keep in mind the fact that the Unit of the Organization is the local conference and that success of the Central office depends strictly on how well a local Conference carries out its own individual responsibilities. The office of the Particular Council is the focal point of all activity of the Society. The main purpose of such a set-up within the Society is to bring about closer cooperation between the Parish Conferences and the Particular Council, in order that a complete service may be provided for the needed cases under their care.

The services given by the Central office are many and varied and cover practically every phase of relief agency operation. One of the most important functions is the complete

and accurate handling of reports. At the Central office in Boston there are conferences reporting monthly on the amount of receipts, expenditures and the number of cases aided and the number of persons in families aided. These reports are turned in by the tenth of each month. The compilation of these reports is sent to the Community Fund Office before the fifteenth of each month.

Accurate handling of reports are made for various reasons some of which are enumerated here:

1. To report the efforts in behalf of the poor to the hierarchy and to the pastors especially to the Archbishop of Boston, Cardinal O'Connell. The Vincentians recognize that the poor belong to the church and the society, and as an agent of the church, they serve as trustee.
2. To report their activities to the people who contribute to their work in such a way that they may retain their interest in the society and support.
3. To have a better understanding of their own personality and their relationship to the work of the society as a whole.
4. To approximate the volume of work that has been accomplished during a given period.
5. To designate and define the specific kinds of work which have been covered.
6. To provide the officers with the opportunity to analyze for them the strengths and weaknesses which have become apparent as results are tabulated.
7. To permit comparisons of service with the services of previous years, which indicate development or deterioration. This makes possible logical planning, especially financial planning.

8. Definite relationships with most agencies are necessary for the best interest of the families under care. Reports help to cement understandings and interpret services, and give the Society a stronger position in the community.

The Society as an organization is measured by its reports. It is only by means of a report that the work of the Society can be set-up, defined and understood.

The Central office also handles the problem cases of members, planning programs for monthly meetings, proper routing of cases to other agencies and interpretation of policies of both public and private agencies to the society.

In 1941 the Central office provided emergency assistance to five hundred and ten persons during the year and in addition three hundred and fifty-three cases were referred to the Central office by Conferences or other agencies.

The Central office referred one hundred and twenty-four cases to local Conferences and one hundred and ten cases to other agencies. One hundred and seventeen cases were handled entirely by the Central office. Over six hundred visits at the Central office were made by the Conference officers and members during the year to seek advice in handling of problem cases.

As an adjunct of the Salvage Bureau the Central office received and referred 3,015 calls for the Collection

Department.

At the present time there are one hundred and seven³ conferences subject to the Metropolitan Central Council.

The cases are referred personally or may be referred by other agencies, such as the Catholic Charitable Bureau, Family Welfare Society, the Boston Provident and the Public Welfare Organizations.

The Present Works of the Vincentian

Family Relationships

Adjustments between father and mother in relationships affecting home life require proper diagnosis of the situation and a plan of treatment. Sometimes health problems, mental or physical, or economic difficulties play a significant part in a family situation. The majority of such cases do not reach the courts and can be worked out with the active cooperation of the pastor, the members of the Conference, and the family visitors. Relations between parents and children and relations between children themselves (usually in cases of step-children) constitute further types of family relationship problems which the Society endeavors to handle. However, if the Vincentian finds that the problem is too deep-seated, co-

³ Eighty-first Annual Report of Particular Council of Boston, p. 9.

operation between the trained professional worker and the Volunteer is most helpful to the solution of the problem.

Health Service, Physical and Mental

A common type of health service is that which arises from confinements. The Society makes arrangements for pre-natal and post-natal care and for hospitalization in Catholic hospitals. In the case of the unmarried mother, the girl is referred to the Catholic Charitable Bureau who in turn will refer her to St. Mary's for confinement. The health problem of a family is always one to be taken into consideration and one to be discussed thoroughly by the Conference members. Many of the Conferences have doctors who are willing at all times to cooperate with them. Hospitalization is always available and with the efforts of the Vincentian, free care at the clinic or hospital can be arranged. Catholic hospitalization for Catholic people is recommended. Catholic hospitals willing to take as many charity cases as possible make the service available to the Vincentian. The Particular Council office is of assistance in making general policies and working out arrangements with the hospitals. The necessary medical supplies and layettes are provided. Proper contacts are made with doctors so that the best possible arrangements for the mother are made.

Operative cases of all kinds are handled. For children, operations for tonsils and adenoids are frequent.

All major operations for children and adults are arranged in Catholic and in public clinics and hospitals.

Dental care and eye treatments for children and adults are arranged. Provisions are made for dentures for adults and glasses are fitted. Most of these cases are referred to the City Hospital Clinics, although public and Catholic clinics are employed.

In the case of a psychiatric problem, this type of case is referred to the trained worker to follow up treatments suggested by the psychiatrist. For instance if a person is in need of nursing care the Vincentian is ever ready to see that this financial expense is met by his Society.

Where children present problems in school or in the home and where they are a part of a difficult family situation, psychological examinations are arranged through a mental hygiene Clinic. However, this type of case is possibly referred to the Catholic Charitable Bureau and cooperative work between the two agencies is done.

Budgeting Service

The mismanagement of family income may be caused by low mentality, large debts built up during periods of unemployment and inadequate income. The Society regularly handles adjustments of budget to reduced conditions of living

and suggests help in solving budget difficulties. If the Vincentian visitor feels that the family in whom he is interested is of a low private income group, and feels that this family would benefit by the Food Stamp Plan, he immediately refers this family to the Central Office. This case is then cleared through the Social Exchange and a thorough investigation is made. Following this investigation, the family is then certified for food stamps through the Central Office.

Housekeeping Service

In motherless families the Society provides housekeepers and supervises them. Such cases are especially found where the mother is deceased and the father wishes to keep the family together. Wherever satisfactory arrangements can be made, the housekeeping service is also arranged for families where the mother is temporarily away from home to receive care in a hospital or sanitarium, or where she is at home and is ill and unable to do the work. Another type of housekeeping service is provided in homes where the mother is declared incompetent. The service in this type of case is usually recommended by the Juvenile Court.

Problem Children

Work with problem children is not undertaken directly by the Society, however if the child is part of the family situation, this child is referred to a Children's agency to

assist in a problem which cannot be isolated from the family group. A case of this type would then be first referred to the Catholic Charitable Bureau and although the St. Vincent de Paul would still be active in the case, there would be cooperative work undertaken by the two agencies.

Relief

Supplementary relief is granted to families requiring this assistance. In parishes where conferences exist the conferences themselves act; in parishes without conferences, the Central Office investigates the case. The supplementary relief consists mostly of clothing and furniture and household articles. Such items as First Communion clothes, Confirmation clothes, graduation outfits, and other clothing not furnished by public departments are given. Some families require temporary plans for groceries, rent and other relief items which are given on an emergency basis until a permanent relief plan can be made. Arrangements for public relief and pensions, for ADC and OAA pensions are frequently handled. Usually these cases require discussion with the family as to whether an application is advisable. They also require follow-up to see that the pensions have been granted and are adequate.

Institutional Placements

Arrangements are made for elderly people to enter the home of Little Sisters of the Poor and other homes for the

aged. Commitments are also arranged to Catholic and County Institutions. The commitments to Catholic orphanages, foster and boarding homes are referred to the Catholic Charitable Bureau.

Spiritual Problems

Intensive work is carried on in cases where there are religious maladjustments. Cases coming to the attention of the Society are invariably referred to the Pastor in each parish and are handled entirely under his supervision. The Society has always stressed the importance of bringing children into the Sunday School. The rectification of marriages, arrangements for Baptisms and the regular reception of the Sacraments are all important points in their spiritual work.

Summer Camps

Arrangements are made for underprivileged children to spend some time in the Sunset Point Camp at Nantasket and the children's names are referred to the Catholic Charitable Bureau. Each visitor is allowed a certain number of children whose names he submits. A thorough physical examination is given each child before his entrance to Camp. In cases where particular children are underprivileged and malnourished the Society sends these children to a Catholic Camp for a definite period of time. The Conference finances this expenditure.

Attorney Services.

Legal services are provided for persons with insufficient means to pay regular fees. In Boston they are most fortunate to have lawyers who are also members of the Society and who are only too eager to give advice and represent individuals in court. The most common forms of legal aid involve property, situations and civil separations.

Agency Relationships

The Society has working relationships with all public and private agencies and has representation on most of the important committees and boards that concern family welfare. This included representation on budget committees, housing, health, recreation, youth and other committees.

Moral Problems

The supervision and treatment of moral problems require sincere and patient effort to eliminate a type of problem that is unwholesome in family life. In a case in which the Visitor is unable to receive cooperation and is aware that conditions are such that they are harmful for children, the case is referred to the SPCC. After referral to this agency, the St. Vincent de Paul and the SPCC endeavor to work on a cooperative basis to reach some improvement. If it is a question of a broken home, the interests of the children are paramount and every concern is given so that they may be placed in good

Catholic foster homes.

Employment

While the Society does not have a regular employment service, the Central office and Conferences do, wherever possible, secure employment for individuals. Often many of the men who are members in the Society, have many contacts whereby they can refer such people for employment. In 1941, 578 situations were procured for people known to the Society.⁴

Cardinal O'Connell Memorial Lot

The Cardinal O'Connell Memorial Lot, dedicated on December 8, 1940, in St. Joseph's Cemetery, West Roxbury, has already provided a place of burial for sixteen Catholic persons who died in destitution.⁵ A complete record is kept of the burials, and suitable simple markers are placed upon the graves. It is quite evident that the establishment of this Memorial Lot will meet a problem that has constantly recurred in the past and will always be with the Society.

Scholarship

In August of 1941, the Particular Council of Boston established at the Boston College School of Social Work a full scholarship covering the two years' course. This scholarship

4 Eighty-First Annual Report of the Particular Council of Boston, p. 10.

5 Ibid., p. 10.

is known as the St. Vincent de Paul Scholarship of the Particular Council of Boston. Award of the Scholarship is determined by examination of candidates who are obliged to submit to a most exacting inquiry into their qualifications. The scholarship is not restricted to members or sons of members.

It is impossible to mention all of the services arranged by the Society. In addition to direct service the Central office serves constantly as a clearing house of information and acts on a consultation basis with many individuals on Catholic family problems. The major emphasis is placed upon the work with the Conference members, and a flow of information concerning families is always going to the Conferences so that the Conferences may act more effectively.

Salvage Bureau Workshop

One of the greatest assets of any Particular Council of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is to own, control and operate a Salvage Bureau. The Salvage Bureau has a two-fold major purpose. First, it enables the Society to provide wearing apparel, stoves, furniture and other household articles at no cost to the poor. Second, it serves, better than anything else could as a Front before the general public, advertising works of the Society. While the Vincentian is, and according to the rules should be, careful not to publicize his charity, yet it seems to be in no way a violation of the spirit to have the

general public aware of the fact that there is such a society and that their works and effort in behalf of the poor spring from that divine spark of charity which every Vincentian has received from the glowing anvil of the Church of Christ.

In order to accomplish its two-fold purpose in a befitting manner, St. Vincent de Paul Salvage Bureau is outstanding in its physical make-up, its policies, business administration, its approach to the general public as well as to particular clients of the various Conferences which form the Particular Council. The Society's Salvage Bureau is distinctly superior in every possible way to similar stores run for profit or stores conducted by other societies and organizations.

Whenever the visitor of any Conference calls at a home and finds the family needing wearing apparel or furniture, a requisition on the Salvage Bureau is made out on a regular printed form and signed. This requisition is then presented at the store and honored provided the goods requisitioned are in stock.

Once a month the Committee on this particular work meets at the Salvage Bureau at which time a complete report of the previous month's activities is made. A discussion follows as to ways and means of increasing their opportunities. A report on the Salvage Bureau's operation is also made at each month's meeting of the Particular Council and a printed quarter-

ly report is distributed at every quarterly meeting.

In relation to the general public patronizing the store, the Salvage Bureau does not sell any article, that is to say, no set price is on the article, but they accept any reasonable offer that is made. In other words, it endeavors to serve the general public regardless of faith by giving them the things they need, at a small price.

The Salvage Bureau is situated at 21 Wareham Street, Boston, Massachusetts. In 1941 over \$12,250 was paid in wages to fifty-four persons employed at both of the stores. One hundred and sixty families were given furniture without charge and over six hundred persons received aid in the forms of clothing and shoes. More than thirty Conferences sent referrals for furniture or clothing or sent men for work relief to this Bureau. Over 5,000 collection calls were handled by the Staff.⁶

All salaries paid to workers at the Salvage Bureau are paid from collections received.

⁶ Eighty-first Annual Report of the Particular Council of Boston, p. 14.

The Contribution of the Society of St.
Vincent de Paul to the Welfare of
This Community

In an age of changing social and economic conditions it is important to weigh the contribution of the Society to the welfare of the community. The troublesome condition which prevailed in the days of Ozanam is peculiarly parallel to those which confront us today.

The Society is a distinctive type of organization in the community. It is an organization based on interests and motives that are primarily religious. Its inspiration is the Christian concept of charity. Animated by such sublime impulses of faith, Frederick Ozanam and his companions took upon themselves the visitation of the poor in their own homes--that great work which has become so essentially characteristic of the Society and which its members are brought within the practice of the priceless lessons of Christian resignation and practical piety. It was he who said, "Go to the poor but do your work with the best methods as well as with the holiest motives."

Today as ever the challenge is hurled at men of faith. The question is addressed particularly to Vincentians, "What are you doing to show the vitality of your faith, what are you doing to prove its truth?" In a word, "Show us your works."

Because of the motive actuating the work of the Society, its contribution to the Boston community is unique. The Society today, as always, aims not only to meet man's material needs but it is still more concerned with his moral and spiritual interests since these latter far transcend in importance those of his physical nature. Such charity makes man conscious of his obligations to his neighbor. It so strengthens and vitalizes his faith that he is able to cultivate a sense of neighborliness in the community.

Animated then with a true spirit of community service the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Boston has progressed, utilizing the best procedures and methods, mindful always, of course, of the fact that the poor have an eminent dignity distinctly their own.

By the very nature of his work the Vincentian's visits to families under his care open to him new horizons of experience which give him a more intelligent view of the problems of the community. The problems of family life in a particular neighborhood therefore are studied in the light of knowledge of community resources and needs.

The Society, then in addition to rendering personal individualized service to persons in difficulties has always at least implicitly aimed to promote general welfare programs. Its members have frequently devoted themselves to eradicating

certain social obstacles by cooperating in constructive movements for the improvement of conditions in the community.

The traditional modesty of the Society, of course, has permeated its work. Little public interpretation was, as a result, sought or encouraged in the beginning. It was feared perhaps that any external manifestation might contravene this traditional spirit of modesty. In these days there seems to be a need for the Vincentian to interpret to the public welfare departments the value of his service to the community. Then, in the future planning of the administration of relief, these public departments may fully realize the valuable contribution which the Society of St. Vincent de Paul of Boston has rendered in the field of social work.

The following report is first-class evidence of the weight of its contribution to the community.

Eighty-First Annual Report of the Particular
Council of Boston

For the year ending Sept. 30, 1941

Receipts

Balance on hand Oct. 1, 1940		\$ 69,812.40
Collections at weekly meetings	10,439.25	
Collections in Churches	31,452.41	
Poor Boxes	72,105.10	
Donations	35,335.26	
Legacies	16,064.22	
Community Funds	79,491.07	
Other Sources	<u>15,744.12</u>	
		260,631.43
Total Receipts and Balance		<u>330,443.33</u>

Expenditures

Total Expenditures	242,720.53
Balance on hand Sept. 30, 1941	<u>87,723.30</u>

Summary of Conference Statistics

Membership

Active Members on Roll Oct. 31, 1940	1,192
Average per cent Attendance at Meetings	65%
Number of Conferences Reporting	107

Corporal Works

Number of families assisted	11,729
Persons assisted	56,478
Visits	69,199
Medical Cases	1,002
Hospital Cases	232
Situations Procured	578
Families on Roll Sept. 30, 1941	1,841
Persons on Roll Sept. 30, 1941	10,280

Conclusion

The whole history of the Society is the story of the rise of a great spiritual leadership from the ranks of the Catholic laity. Out of the immigrant settlements, here, there and everywhere, arose groups of men consumed with a noble enthusiasm for the faith of neglected children. They played a large part in obliging American philanthropy to respect the religion of Catholic families under its care. They pioneered in keeping Catholic charities abreast of the times and in bringing to it the best experience in American Social Work. Catholic child-placing, organized Catholic aid for handicapped families, day nurseries, Catholic work for delinquent children owe their origin very largely to the pioneer efforts of the members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Boston.

One word can describe the trend and development of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Boston--growth. But for the most part its work and spirit remain static. Humble in spirit, unpretentious, the Society's achievements escape much public attention.

The workers in their local conferences continue their weekly meetings, discussions, and expenditures throughout the year. The Particular Council likewise goes on with its larger Special Works. And each year the reports of both continue in their unique self-effacing manner--a short statistical com-

pilliation of figures summing up totals of things that can be remembered. Conspicuous, however, is the steady fire of charity that must burn in the Society for its works not only carry on, they grow. Where there is growth, there is life. Where there is life, there is somewhere a throbbing restive spirit. Here it is, the spirit of Vincent.

The St. Vincent de Paul Society in Boston has proved by its history to be a living branch in the vine of Vincent. Its tiny beginning gave no indication of its vitality. If its growth continues apace, some future writer may tell a story of greater deeds. Yet, it is difficult to foresee that the Society of the future will have a spirit of closer kinship to Vincent de Paul than the builders of the Society in Boston.

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